

Report by Jorgen Jorgensen of a
journey undertaken for discovery a
~~the~~ practicable route from Hobart Town
to Circular Head. Nov 8th 1826.

Sir

On the 2nd Sept. Mark Logan,
Andrew Colbert (a black man) & myself
departed from Hobart Town, &
conformably to the instructions you
supplied me with we proceeded
direct for Dr Ross's farm on
the Shannon where we arrived
on the 6th. We found it totally
impracticable to cross the river
thereabouts, & were therefore obliged
to move on to Mr Patterson's farm
3 mls farther up the river.
We had experienced nothing
but bad weather, & incessant
rain, since our departure
from Hobart Town; & we found
it equally impossible to cross
the river at Mr Patterson's.
We were informed that the river
had never been known to be so
high

Extract from Van Diemen's Land Company report

1828

as during the present season.

Finding all our attempts to effect a crossing ineffectual, we thought it most advisable to proceed to

Patrick's Plains 16 miles farther up, where we were told the Shannon was more shallow than lower down.

After having procured two dogs, & filled our knapsacks with as much provisions as they would contain, we set out on the 11th. The rain continued to pour down in torrents the whole of the day; & having to walk over high marshes covered with water, & over rocky hills, it was late before we arrived at Patrick's Plains, where we found shelter in a stock-keepers' hut. We soon discovered that the Shannon had risen to an unprecedented height; the weather was cold & the whole country around covered with snow.

I do not attempt here to supply a description of those parts we had already traversed, nor of the country adjacent to Patrick's plains, as these are matters sufficiently known to many of the inhabitants of this colony. The river having somewhat subsided, I determined if possible to cross on the 16th; & for that purpose, we left the hut in the morning with our knapsacks on our shoulders well stored with provisions. Owing to some erroneous information I had acquired, I was led to believe that the Shannon was deepest on that side where we were now; & consequently more shallow in the middle & towards the opposite bank. I soon discovered my mistake; for I had scarcely reached the middle, before I got suddenly into deep water, & as the current ran with great impetuosity

being encumbered with a heavy knapsack on my back, I lost my equilibrium & it was not without difficulty that I was extricated from my perilous situation. Seeing that for the present every attempt to cross would be in vain, I despatched Mark Logan, & the stock-keeper Andrew Martin, to Mr Patterson's for a fresh supply of provisions, that we might keep up our stock, as I could obtain none at Pabuck's plains. On their return ~~journey~~ the following day, I learned that the river at Mr Patterson's was a complete sea, & that the intercourse between various parts of the country was at a stand. Even at the Clyde, which is generally fordable, the Government cart was detained, not being able to cross, & we now proceeded about nine miles higher up the river, to a place where we were informed that the Bushrangers

Had fallen a tree sometime previously, but when
arriving there, we observed that the rapidity of
the stream had given the tree a direction parallel
with the Eastern bank, & we had to retrace our
steps disappointed. On the 20th after having carefully
examined the R. & remarking that it had
subsided about 9 miles, we came to a determination
to endeavour to cross it in a place which was
very wide, but appeared more free of stone
at the bottom, than lower down where I
had attempted it before. Thus, the 21st, the
weather being fine, which I had observed to
be generally the case with the wind from
Southward to Eastward, we proceeded on our
journey, & succeeded in crossing the Shannon.
During the day we passed over some good land
marshes not more than ankle deep in ^{water},
& the country well wooded tho' not super-
abundantly. We saw numerous Cider trees
which I was told afford an excellent
beverage in summer. White Gums, very tall
straight & of good size appeared here in
great quantity. Kangaroos were plentiful

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I we killed some both for ourselves & the dogs. Towards evening, we arrived at the South-west extremity of the Great Lake, where we constructed a hut for the night. The wind shortly veered round to the N.W. which as well as the wind from the S.W. invariably brings cold weather, frost, rain or sleet; & these had been the prevailing winds since we left Hobart Town. Friday the 22nd in the morning we set out early in the direction pointed out in our instructions; & after having walked over 4 or 5 miles of marshes & seemingly good land, we were suddenly & unexpectedly stayed in our progress by a river, which divides some very extensive plains, stretching in all directions farther than the eye can reach. We learned afterwards that this R. was the Ouse, or more commonly termed the Big R. The depth, magnitude, & rapidity of the current of this R. far exceeded the Shannon in those particulars. We followed its banks downwards for about one mile, & upwards for 3 miles.

but could find no place where to cross. We were, therefore reluctantly compelled to take shelter in the bush for the night, at some distance from the R. for we could observe neither tree nor wood near its banks. Saturday the 23rd the weather continued cold & wet; & it was doubtful whether we would be able to cross the R. for some time to come, we put ourselves on a strict allowance of biscuit, & other provisions we were supplied with. I sent Colbert to hunt kangaroos. Logan remained to guard the hut; whilst I proceeded along the banks of the R. to endeavour to discover a place to cross. I found it every where deep & rapid, it took a serpentine course & often ran in different & almost opposite directions. After tracing the R. upwards for about 7 mls. I came towards the bottom of a mountain covered with snow, & I now perceived the R. pursued an exact Westward direction. This induced me to imagine that by following its course I should finally be enabled to proceed in my prescribed route without any material interruption, & I therefore returned

to make preparation & for setting out early in
 the morning, Sunday the 24th we took advan-
 -tage of a clear morning. & proceeded at an
 early hour towards the mountain mentioned
 yesterday, but after having traversed the same
 ground I had done the previous day, & waiting
 about 2 miles farther up, I observed the R
 to take a direction towards the N. This again
 disappointed our hopes. I entertained some
 idea, that ~~as~~ we had advanced nearly towards
 its source, for we saw two stupendous rocks,
 between which the water precipitated itself
 with amazing impetuosity & great roaring,
 which led me to form that conclusion. We
 ascended a high hill & constructed a hut. I lost
 no time in examining the country beyond the
 two high rocks alluded to. & now found that
 the R flows in a direction from the North-
 north-west, as far as the eye can reach from
 the lofty summit whence I saw it. Sept 25th
 we set out early in defiance of the wet & stormy
 weather to cross the R about 4 mls higher
 up, where I had observed a number of rocks
 above the water, & where I imagined we might
 be able to make our way from one rock

to another, but after ⁹ having reached one of considerable size, we found the current so rapid & the water so deep, that we were under the necessity of returning to our hut. I have hitherto refrained from giving any particular description of those parts of the country which I had lately traversed, that I might avoid tedious repetitions. I shall now endeavour to furnish you with a general description. From the summit of a lofty eminence I had found an opportunity, in very clear weather, to observe the whole of the surrounding country. I mean very near the two rocks mentioned under the 24th of Sept. Our distance from the middle part of the Large Lake was then 12 mls, & the exact bearing of it East. The country appeared to be vast plains, (certainly the most extensive in Van Diemen's Land) encompassed by ranges of mountains, & divided by numerous rivers, those to the Westward of the River abounding with lakes & lagoons. The large plain on the Eastern side takes a range as far as the Great Lake to the Eastward; extends to the bottom of the Northern mountains. & to the

Southward is again ¹⁰terminated by the Curve,
which there takes an Easterly direction. The
extent of the plains may be more easily estimated
when I mention the bearings & distances of all
the places I marked down at the time. The
Frenchman's Cap bore S.W. by W. 35 miles;
Mt Dundas, W. 36 mls; the Parson's Hood,
W $\frac{1}{2}$ N. 34 miles; other mountains apparently
of the same range, from W by N. to N.W. & so
on without interruption, till they join one,
the bearing of which was, where we stood,
exactly N. & about 7 mls distant. Thus to the
eye it would appear, nearly as if the great
western range of mountains situate to the
Eastward of the Great Lake; the Northern
mountains, the range marked in Scott's map
adjacent to the Peak like a Volcano,
taking a N.E. & S.W. direction till the same
range joins the Frenchman's Cap, & other
mountains all form a vast circular sweep
& the plains I am describing, skirted to the
bases of all these mountains. But as the

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 distance, at which we ¹¹were placed, from the
 ranges in the West, rendered it impossible for
 us to ascertain with precision, whether there
 might not be at the bottom of them, & to some extent
 from them, lower ridges & forest land, we can
 not calculate with accuracy the limits of the
 plains to the Westward of the Ouse. In
 Scott's map, no notice is taken of the mountain
 which forms a junction between the range
 in the N.W. & the Frenchmans Cap; the
 most conspicuous of those are, one of great height
 far loftier than any I have yet seen in this
 country, which we named Mt Dundas; & another
 we marked Parson's Hood. From the same
 eminence whence I took my observations, I
 found the bearing & distance of Table Mt to
 be S.S.W. 12 mls. This mountain which is
~~is~~ situated not far distant from Lake Fergus
 must ever afford an excellent guide to travellers
 coming from the ^{North} N.W. part of the Island. Our
 greatest distance from Hobart Town was at this
 time about 100 miles. The country we had
 traversed exhibited a variety of soils; on the

high plains we found rich red clay, partly
overspread with small stones & producing feed
for sheep. These were dry in all sorts of weather.
On the banks of the R. but not farther than 1
mile from it in any place, we observed some fine
black & deep soil, well adapted for cultivation.
Closer to the woods, & in a manner sheltered
by them, we found ~~great~~ quantities of good
marsh-land, & surrounding hills covered with
trees, but of no very large dimensions, offering
good shelter for sheep & cattle. Could we form
an estimate of the goodness of the feed from
the amazing flocks of kangaroos which are ever
where swarming about here. I might feel in-
clined to pronounce this part of the country
well calculated for the purpose of farming.
The extent, including the marshes & good land
we had traversed, from Patricks' plains to
the extreme limits of our present excursion
cannot be estimated at less than 200,000
acres. Yet I feel diffident in pronouncing
absolutely on a point which more competent
judges might decide differently upon the same

signs of wild cattle, & a number of native huts, but deserted at this season of the year. We could not trace any, even the slightest indication of those parts having ever been visited by white man before. Had they been so, the nature of the country the numerous rivers, & great number of lakes & lagoons in the Western plains, could not have escaped notice: but all these cannot be seen from the high plains, nor from any other part of the Great Lake; & it is only by ascending high summits much farther to the N. that a perfect view of them can be obtained. Any one travelling some small distance to the Southward of the plains ever somewhat N of Lake Tengus, will completely miss sight of them. The climate is generally cold, & the mornings are attended with frost, but, when the sun occasionally breaks out the weather becomes mild & warm. The range of high mountains in the N W which partly encompass the plains are covered with deep snow & ~~there~~ thus the winds from those quarters are accompanied with cold, rain & sleet.

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But the Table Mt though lofty is free of snow.
From the height it very clearly appeared to
that there existed a practical opening into the
extreme West country, immediately to the South
ward of Mt Dundas; & we intended could
we succeed in crossing the R to shape our course
directly for that place. My instructions pointed
out a route a little farther to the Northward;
but the impracticable character of the country
in that direction left us little room to hope
that we should find a road by pursuing that
track. So far as we had hitherto preceded,
& for 20 mls farther, a cart & oxen may be
driven without much difficulty. During my
continuance in those parts, I one day straggled
over towards the ^{Large} ~~Great~~ Lake, & proceeded a
considerable way to the Northward; & to me
it seems not improbable, that an opening
might be found to the Northward of the West
mountains, leading into the N. E. country

What is here meant by the western range of mountains, is that range stretching N & S. & situated immediately to the Eastward of the Large Lake. The weather had from the commencement of our journey, proved highly unfavourable to our views; scarcely a day passed without heavy rains, snow & boisterous winds; tho' the sun would sometimes appear for a few hrs or minutes thro' a clear sky. We made every attempt in our power to cross the R. in various parts, but no human art or contrivance could avail us. The depth of the R. & its impetuous rapidity of the stream, proved insurmountable obstacles in our way & frustrated all our endeavours. Finding it useless to waste more time in an impracticable pursuit, & judging it might be of some service to convey to you, as early as possible the information I had acquired (as I had reason to believe that I had in part crossed Mr Hellyer's intended tract) I was induced to fall back on the Shannon, & to dispatch one of my

companions to town, for the two-fold object of transmitting you an account of my proceedings, & procuring a supply of provisions. On Thursday the 28th, we left our station for Patrust's Plains & on our return took more particular notice of the country between the large lake & the Plains than we had done on our route on. The fine marshes I have formerly mentioned may be said to continue, in an almost uninterrupted succession, for 10 or 12 mls, stretching to the right & left; & are well sheltered with trees & woods. We saw large quantities of stringy bark for building, some 80 to 90 feet in height, & 3 to 4 ft in diameter. When we arrived at that part of the Shannon where we had on a former occasion crossed over, we found the R. to have risen so high that we could not venture into it. but this caused no less regret as we could make for Dr Ross's farm, where we arrived on the evening of the 29th. On our arrival here we found the country in a state of alarm; the Natives & even the bushrangers having lately committed depredations in the neighbourhood. I have omitted mentioning that as it was not improbable Mr Hellyer

might descend into the plains during my return to the Shannon. I addressed the gentleman a letter secured from wet, in a proper manner, & exhibited in a conspicuous place, acquainting him with my late movements & supplying such information as I thought might be of use to him, should he find it necessary to visit the inhabited part in the vicinity of the Shannon. The ensuing morning the 30th March Logan proceeded to Keshmiltown, & crossed the Shannon on a tree which had been fallen, not far from Mr Patterson's farm since our late departure. The messenger having returned from town with new instructions for me, & being supplied with a proper quantity of provisions & other necessary articles, we again set out from Mr Patterson's on the 11th of Oct., with a view to cross the Curse either at Thomeon's or Pitearn's about 3 mls distant, so to penetrate into the large plains by the way of Lake Fergus; but all our attempts for successive days proved abortive. We therefore finally left on the 15th, with an intention to keep a more

Westerly course than we had done on our late journey, to shorten our distance if possible, & to observe the nature of the country. We travelled over high, stony, & unprofitable ridges, impracticable for carts. On the 16th we proceeded in our journey, & traversed the country in different directions; & both on the sides of the Shannon & the Curse, as well as in the middle; we saw nothing but stony hills & scrub, intermingled with large quantities of Black-wattle trees. On the morning of the 18th we arrived at that part of the Curse which we had first seen ~~on~~ after leaving the Great Lake on our former journey. We deposited our knapsacks in a safe place amongst some rocks, & immediately set about measuring the depth of the River. We also traced it down for several mls, & then upwards for a place to cross at, but to no purpose; we again resumed our knapsack & set out for the hut we had constructed on the 24th Sept last, & where our former canoe had terminated. After several fruitless attempts

To cross the river in a number of places, we departed on the 20th, with an intention of tracing it along its banks to its source. The weather was stormy, cloudy, & hazy, so that we could see but a little distance before us. The ground we passed over might probably be deemed a tolerably good run for cattle; but the absence of fuel & shelter would render it useless for any other purpose; yet we saw great numbers of Kangaroos. I counted 15 or 16 creeks some of considerable size emptying themselves into the Guse. I was now interrupted in my progress by a river, also falling into the Guse & running in a N by E & S by W direction, apparently taking its source in that ridge of mountains which is marked "supposed ridge" on the map you furnished me with. A little farther upon the opposite side, a river also empties itself into the Guse, deriving its waters from a lake in the Western plains. We crossed the Little River, (7 mls from our last night station) which was

ufficiently deep & rapid; & then proceeded 4
mils higher up, in a N W direction, examining
the Big River with great care as we passed
along. The river then took a Westwardly direction
for about a mil. & here to our inescapable
satisfaction we observed a place which might
be forded with some little exception. We
waded over it far above middle deep. We
now proceeded in a direct Western course
ascended stony hills of great height, & fixed
our abode for the night amongst some rocks.
From hence we perceived the river to run
in a North-north-west direction, till we
lost sight of it in the mountains. I lost
no time in taking a view of the country, & making
careful bearings. I stood on a lofty & rocky
eminence, & to my surprise perceived, when
placing the compass on a rock, that its
vibration was so quick, that I could make no
observation by it. Most probably iron ore
may be found here in abundance. I had
to descend on lower ground & thence

observed Mt- Dundas bearing SW. the Parsons
Hood S W by ~~SW~~ W, the Peak like a Volcano
N W \pm W. Table Mt S by E. The Great Lake about
S E. We had been forced a great way farther to the
Northward than was consistent with our views, &
we now observed the plains so covered with water
that the only practicable route for us to pursue
would be that marked in the instructions for
our first journey. The country presented
nothing of service to man; it was rocky, &
thinly wooded, & Banjaroo scarce. Sunday
the 21st October, in the morning the weather was
gloomy & Lazy; but as I had yesterday after-
noon taken a view of the country, I found
no difficulty in shaping our route, which
we pursued in the direction of W by N.
A river about 4 mls from our last sleeping place
presently interrupted our progress. It emptied
itself into one of the lakes in the plains, &
we found it so deep & so rapid that we

were again forced ^{2nd} into a Northern course along its banks. We were every hour impeded by lagoons, & large basins of water which caused much delay, as we were obliged to walk round them. After proceeding 7 mls upwards, we at length observed a place where to cross, with the aid of a stout line, which we carried with us to assist us in ^{such} operations. Two of our dogs had nearly perished, as they were driven by the current into a fall, about 2 or 3 fathoms below the place where we crossed. Our route now lay thro' thick scrub, & over high rocks & stony vallies. The country assumed a sterile & desolate appearance & kangaroo not to be obtained, so that we were obliged to subsist entirely on the provisions in our knapsacks. We now began to see some Pine trees but of small dimensions. We were all this time steering for the mountain marked Peak like a Volcano. The weather being very lazy I seized every opportunity to take

the bearing of such points as were known to us. We found it difficult to find on some place among the rocks for shelter during the night, we saw few trees hereabouts, those we saw were chiefly red & white Gum but of diminutive sizes. Our firewood was wet & burned badly. Sunday the 22nd after a dark & rainy night the sun came out clear in the morning, we proceeded towards the Peak, but kept in a course a little to the Southward of its summit. It was so deeply covered with snow, that it would have been imprudent to have attempted to ascend the top of it. As I concluded that we were in a direct line with Pieman's River, & at no very great distance from it, I was sanguine in my hopes that we should in a few days be able to reach it. But difficulties of an ordinary description now began to thicken fast upon us. The snow in some places lay 5 feet deep, we had to step from rock to rock where the least false step would have

proves fatal to us. We made little progress
tho' we walked quickly having so ^{many} ~~many~~
winding courses to take, to avoid the higher
cliffs, rocky summits, & deep gullies.
We observed from a lofty eminence, that
the Peak only communicated with the range
of mountains before us by means of unres-
sistant ridges of rocks, & at the same time we beheld
a frightful chasm many miles in width, to
the view a bottomless gulph. To avoid these
impracticable places, we proceeded a little
more to the Westward, but were again obstru-
cted by a river, which we found means to
cross on a pine tree. This R runs in a N & S
direction & issues from a large & magnificent
sheet of water, which is formed between the
Peak & the large range of mountains already
described. The dreary & barren country around
us supplies nothing for food; even the crows
had deserted this inhospitable region; our
dogs were in danger of starving, but we

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spared them what little we could out of our stock. During the night our hut afforded but a slight defence against the inclemency of the weather, & we were disheartened for fuel. Monday the 23rd October the weather continued stormy, wet, & cold. We pursued our route in the morning, imagining we might make our way round the S. part of the large lake; but, after some painful walking thro' exceedingly thick scrub, we observed that this lake is the source of at least 2 rivers; the one is that I have just noticed; the other is broad & rapid, flowing toward the S. S. W, along the range of mountains, & afterwards pursues a S. S. E. course. No cart can ever cross in this direction neither can sheep or cattle be driven across even in the summer season. The snow was falling in a dense shower, our clothes down to latter, & we therefore returned over the river with the intention of seeking a less uncomfortable place for shelter, than the previous

night. We were about 28 miles distant from the mouth of Bernier's R. & 46 from Circular Head. During the night a gale blew hard from the Westward, the snow fell without intermission, & the frost was so severe that the snow on the two ends of the log of wood which was burning in the middle would not melt. Thus, the 24th the dawn of the morning presented a scene of desolation & terror, the snow had fallen 2 feet during the night, & the weather was so foggy that we could only see a short distance before us. It now became a matter of prudence, & of absolute necessity to descend into the lower country without delay. Every moment would increase our danger. But Andrew Colbert (the black man) seemed to be seized with a species of lethargy, & would willingly have remained in the mountain, supposing the weather might clear up. tho our provisions ran

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very short. I was obliged to cut up what
flannel I had with me, to provide my
companions with pieces to cover their feet,
which were benumbed with cold. Unwilling
to relinquish the object of our expedition
& being desirous of information I kept
to the Westward in my descent, so as if possible
to get between the large plains & mountains
to take a nearer view of the passage I
supposed to exist immediately to the South
ward of Mt Dundas. Altho' the weather con-
tinued hazy & the snow fell incessantly, we
proceeded onwards with great alacrity.
The country from Hobart Town to the Peak is
one perpetual ascent, & therefore more
difficult to travel than when returning.
On the 25th we continued our course in
a S. direction inclining from the lay of
the country a little to the E.

& we hailed with satisfaction the appearance of kangaroos, which relieved us from anxiety on the score of wanting provisions. The land now began to assume a more favourable aspect, being in some places well adapted for grazing & cultivation abounding in wood such as Stringy Bark & Gum for building & fuel, & affording shelter for sheep & cattle. After having passed a R we encamped on its banks for the night. Thursday the 26th Oct, we, proceeded on our journey early in the morning the wind was high, & the rain poured down in torrents. Since leaving the Peak the weather had been so lazy, we could not discern any object we were acquainted with, we therefore travelled solely by the compass. We now enjoyed the gratification of traversing for many miles a country, which presented

much level found excellent for pasturage. The
lusciance of the vegetation; the size & strength
of the trees (Stringy Bark & Gum) innumerable
trocks of wild cattle; swarms of Brush &
Forest Kangaroos; all supplied indications
of a good country, & a milder climate than
we had lately visited. We made several
attempts to range more towards the W.
but the nature of the country impelled us
towards the E. After passing a river or two
we arrived in the evening on the borders
of a capacious lake, which, according to
my computation ought to be Lake Turqu
but I could scarcely flatter myself, that
after having observed no marks to steer by
for 4 days past my reckoning should be
so correct. What rendered me more dubious
was, the sheet of water I saw was scarcely
inferior in dimensions to the Great Lake
whereas Lake Turqu is marked in the

Chart as of very minor extent. We remained here for the night. Friday the 27th the weather being fine & clear we had a fine opportunity to take a good view of the country. Everywhere about the Lake we observed land, which elevates itself in a series of arched hills all around it. We saw many tracks of wild cattle, many native huts, & we killed a kangaroo which must have weighed not less than 150 pounds, tho' the night had been wet & the wind high. We felt little of cold. The lofty forests, the ridges which run N N W. & S. S. E. in a sloping direction for a great distance back, covering others a pair of less high, gradually form a fence against the Northern & Western blast. After walking for several miles over a fine tract of land, we espied the Lake land near the Clyde, & the two super-

boared not far distant from the Shannon point; this convinced me it was the Lake Lergus we had left in the morning. Reflecting that we were not more than 40 mls from some inhabited place; that the large river I have particularly noticed on the 23rd mist (which I suppose to be the Derwent) could not be forded for the present, nor for some length of time to come; being short of provisions: our clothes & boots worn out & considering that a knowledge of the such country I had lately traversed ought to be communicated to you without ^{loss} ~~loss~~ of time I determined to return to Hobart Town, there to convey to you my firm conviction, that at a more favorable season of the year, a road for sheep & cattle, (& perhaps also for carts) may certainly be traced immediately to the Southward of Mt Dundas; & thence to

Premar's River & Cape Grim. During our journey, we had taken a circular range; approached the Frenchman's Cap within 15 miles, & explored the whole of that part of the country which is marked "unknown" in Scott's map, & situate to the Eastward of that range of mountains mentioned under date of the 23rd inst.

We passed the whole of the afternoon over fine green hills, producing excellent feed for sheep. As the country between where we remained during the night & the Shannon point, had been partially explored by others, & as I imagine no portion of it could be granted to the Company I refrain from swelling my narrative with a description of it. On our return we avoided the Shannon, & proceeded to Town

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by the way of New Norfolk. We
arrived in Hobart Town on the
1st of November.

(Signed) Jorgen Jorgensen

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M.11/3 Jorgen Jorgenson

- (1) Correspondence relating to Jorgen Jorgensen.
- (2) Copies of diaries of J. Jorgensen, including Journey to Ouse Plateau, Repat of Jorgensen to V.D.L. Co. on route between Hobart and Circular Head, and Journal kept while exploring from Circular Head to the Pieman River, 1826-7.